



2005

Legislative Update

Update for the 21st District

Senator Paull Shin



Summer 2005

Dear Neighbors,

Thank you for the great honor of representing you in Olympia. I appreciate your interest and feedback on the issues that came before the Legislature. Your questions and comments help me do a better job of serving you.

This was a very productive legislative session. We passed landmark legislation on transportation, children's health, education and economic development. Best of all, we completed the session by passing a responsible state budget that stepped up funding for critical priorities without any general tax increases.

As chair of the Senate International Trade & Economic Development Committee, I was committed to working in a bipartisan manner to support job growth in Washington. Our committee had a very successful year, and we were able to make some key investments in small businesses development and trade promotion. I will continue my work to support access to capital for growing businesses and new markets for Washington products. After all, a reliable family-wage job is the key to the American dream.

At the beginning of the session, my committee began work on a five year plan for Washington. This plan includes the creation of 100,000 family wage jobs, increases in business revenue, and efforts to narrow the imbalance between exports from and imports to our state. We will continue our work on these long-term goals.

My seatmates from the 21st District and I fought hard this session for maintaining the status quo at Snohomish County's Paine Field. To date, we have been successful in preventing new commercial airline passenger service at Paine Field, but we must remain vigilant. I was very pleased to hear the county again publicly state that it is opposed to commercial air service at Paine Field. Though commercial service is not on the immediate horizon, we will continue to guard against the assumption that Paine Field will host expanded passenger service. The Snohomish County Airport is a vital economic engine for our county and the Boeing Company, and it is critical that we keep it running well. And we must protect the quality of life that makes our community so attractive to families and businesses.

Again, many thanks for your comments during the legislative session. During the interim, please keep in touch with your ideas as I develop my priorities for next year.

Sincerely,

Sen. Paull Shin

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Transportation: getting you there safely

The transportation package the Legislature passed this year is the biggest infrastructure investment in the history of our state. This investment will address our most pressing transportation safety needs, repairing over 100 bridges in danger of collapse when the next earthquake hits. It will also make improvements to traffic bottlenecks and create more than 35,000 new jobs to help speed up our economic recovery.

For our area, I secured \$65 million for highway safety and traffic improvements. There is significant funding in this plan for upgrading Interstate 5 interchanges at 196th Street and state Route 525. I also secured \$1.5 million for a temporary Sounder station in Mukilteo that will serve commuters heading to Seattle. And I fought for funding for other proven strategies that take cars and trucks off the road: freight rail, park and ride lots, and better commuter bus service.



Another important facet of this transportation package is the \$1 billion going to our cities and counties to address dangerous intersections, damaged roadways and traffic chokepoints. Every jurisdiction will get direct funding and grants for road improvements, public transit, rail upgrades and freight mobility. This package is a real boost for local government, and demonstrates a new sense of partnership between the state and our cities and counties.

All these great transportation projects will be financed through reasonable user fees. The increase in the gas tax will be phased in slowly during the next four years, along with small annual weight fees on passenger vehicles. The cost to the average driver will be minimal. We built strict accountability into this plan, including independent performance audits that will continually gauge whether projects are on time and on budget.

The state budget: supporting your priorities

K-12 education

Kids and schools have always been my top priority, and according to Article IX, Section 1 of our Washington State Constitution, funding public education is the state's paramount duty. I have been concerned about the level of school funding for the past several years, and I fought this year to increase our commitment to the future of the school kids in our local districts and around the state.

This year's budget represents a 10 percent increase in K-12 education funding. We reinstated the voter-approved initiatives on class sizes and wages for teachers, expanded the successful Learning Assistance and Readiness to Learn programs, and boosted funding for school construction. We must continue to help every student achieve academic success.

One priority for next year is to finish the work we have begun on simple majority school levies. Voters deserve the opportunity to decide whether school levies must still pass by 60 percent, but first the Legislature must pass a resolution to put the question on a statewide ballot.



Higher education

I have dedicated most of my working life to higher education, both as a community college professor and a legislator. Higher education is the single most important factor for people, young or old, to achieve their goals. I am very concerned about the lack of space at our colleges and universities, and I was proud to vote for an education budget that provides 7,900 additional higher education enrollment slots. The budget will also give more assistance to students in need of financial aid.

The Legislature also begins to address fairness for many part-time faculty members at community and technical colleges who are paid far less than full-time faculty, yet often work similar hours.

Children's health care

This year, we reversed the trend of cutting kids off health care. In 2003, the Legislature made a number of policy and funding decisions that resulted in the loss of health care for between 40,000 and 60,000 children. I voted against that budget, and this year fought for a spending plan that works toward the goal of all children in our state having health care coverage by 2010.

Our budget eliminates the premiums for children's health coverage, as well as the administrative barriers that were keeping many children from maintaining enrollment. While we can't achieve all of our goals in one year, this budget does provide health care to thousands more children. Currently, working with the federal Medicaid program, the state provides health care to about 550,000 children.

In this year's budget, we also maintain coverage for 100,000 adults in the Basic Health Plan and refrain from imposing medication and transportation co-pays for Medicaid clients.

Legislative Accomplishments



Honoring our veterans

Military service in southern or central Asia as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and service in the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom are now included in the list of conflicts which qualify state employees for service credit under certain state pension plans.



Oil Spill Advisory Council

This citizens' council, which is not dominated by the oil industry, will review environmental safety issues to enhance oil spill prevention and ensure a rapid response in the event of an oil spill.

Minority-owned businesses

The Legislature doubled the size of a business capital loan program to \$100 million as part of an effort to reduce the 11-month waiting list of women- and minority-owned businesses who wish to participate.



Offshore outsourcing

The Legislature commissioned a task force to study state contracts performed outside the United States and their impact on the loss of family-wage jobs and Washington's economy.

Mental health parity

Health insurers must now provide the same annual or lifetime dollar limits, the same co-payments, deductibles, coinsurance, out-of-pocket maximums, and doctor visit limits for mental health services as for other health services. More than 30 states have already approved this kind of legislation, and experience shows that premiums go up by less than 1 percent as a result.



Clean cars

Vehicle emissions produce more than half the pollutants that dirty our atmosphere; we risk exceeding federal clean air standards. The "clean car" law will ensure that out-of-

state auto manufacturers are doing their part to improve the environment, combat asthma and other respiratory diseases, and improve your gas mileage.

Election reforms

In response to inconsistencies in vote-counting procedures, confusion about provisional ballots and concern about the voting rights of military service personnel, we passed a series of bills



to refine the process, but not erect new barriers against legitimate voters.

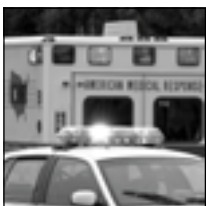
Performance audits

Independent auditors will ensure that state agencies operate efficiently, respond to their customers' needs, provide quality services, and comply with laws and regulations.



Keeping our streets safe

The Legislature passed a law to keep traffic signal preemption devices in the hand of those who need them most, our first responders. This bill prohibits members of the general public from

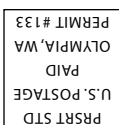


using these devices that allow people to change traffic signals at will. If these devices got in to the hands of the wrong people, it could wreak havoc in the safe and normal traffic flow on our city streets.

Strengthening our community

Each year, the Legislature identifies key investments to improve the quality of life in our community, enhance higher education for our students and improve our infrastructure. The capital budget, as it's called, is all about creating the kind of state in which we all want to live. I was able to secure funding for several projects in our area, including:

- \$20 million for Edmonds Community College facilities.
- \$1 million for the Edmonds Center for the Arts.
- \$4.5 million for ball fields and recreational facilities in Mukilteo.
- \$200,000 for the Mukilteo skate park.



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